

associated with bureaucratic red tape. We are going to try to reduce the amount of bureaucratic red tape next week by dealing with OSHA, but we know now from reports from the National Association of Manufacturers that 12 percent of the cost of any manufactured item in America is due to the cost of paperwork compliance.

The Kansas Hospital Association has told me that for every hour of health care they provide, they also have to have an hour to just comply with the paperwork. An hour of health care now equals an hour of paperwork compliance. If we could reduce that to just half, we would make our companies more competitive. That alone would help us bring jobs back to America.

Our energy policy needs to be addressed. We now are facing \$2 gasoline in America, much of it driven by boutique gasolines demanded by the EPA. Blends that are designed for winter and summer in our limited number of refineries and limited number of pipelines cause temporary shortages and drive gas up. We should pass the energy bill that addresses and encourages ethanol and biodiesels, renewable resources that cannot only help lower the cost of energy but also raise the cost of commodities for farmers.

We also need to produce more energy. If we could pass the energy bill, it would create 700,000 jobs in America. Our tax policy needs to be addressed, but it is buried into the cost of our products. The loaf of bread that costs a dollar is increased by 2 cents just by taxes.

We also need to address lifelong learning, trade policy and litigation reform. We can change the status of these, status quo and bring jobs home.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EMANUEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HEALTH CARE SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, there really is a medical liability crisis in this country. Americans realize there is an urgent problem, but I think many are unsure of how to solve that problem.

In my view, they need to look no farther than California for an answer as to what to do about this medical liability crisis, because in the early 1970s in California we faced a medical liability crisis very similar to the one that is spreading across the Nation now; and at that time, Governor Jerry Brown teamed up with members in the State Senate and members in the State Assembly and passed the Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act, which is referred to as MICRA.

As health care costs hammer our citizens and limit the jobs available, it is imperative that the Nation follow California's example and bring structure and stability to the medical liability system.

I say that because Californians enjoy a very secure competitive liability system. MICRA limited noneconomic damages to those injured, while ensuring full compensation for lost wages and for medical costs. Doctors have the benefit of some of the lowest medical liability premiums in the Nation. Since MICRA was enacted, medical liability premiums across this Nation have increased by 750 percent. In California, the increase is less than half that number, less than half the Nation's average. That means that we are doing something right, and let me give my colleagues some other facts.

Disputes in California are settled 26 percent faster, and health care costs are 6 percent lower. That saves the patients in our State \$6 billion per year, and I think it speaks volumes as to our system's capabilities.

Yesterday, the House passed H.R. 4280, and by doing so we took the California model, and we applied it to the entire Nation. This is about common-sense reform, reform we know will work because we have tried it.

Health care costs have skyrocketed over the last decade. Advanced medical technology, advanced therapy, increased use of prescription drugs, all of these paired with inadequate cost containment have led to runaway prices; but, Mr. Speaker, I do not think we want to stand for this. I do not think my colleagues want to stand for this. It is not acceptable to stand by and watch our constituents unfairly carry the burden of a lacking system.

Systems like MICRA allow for patients to recover from their health care costs. State hospital associations estimate that every hour of care requires an hour of paperwork. One hour of doctor-to-patient care surely does not require the cost of that hour plus an additional hour of an administrator filling out forms. It is inefficient, it is clumsy; and thankfully we will no longer stand for it because by a 30-plus margin we have moved in a strong, bipartisan way to take our country towards medical liability improvement.

Employers, large and small, have struggled to keep their businesses up to the phenomenal speeds set by racing costs.

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Finally, we have introduced a way for businesses to provide health coverage because they care about their employees, without compromising the integrity of their businesses and products that they produce.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for passing this much-needed legislation to preserve access to quality health care costs, not just for Californians, but now for all Americans. We passed this legislation yesterday, the

bill is currently pending in the Senate. It is my hope that the Senate will act expeditiously so that we can get this legislation to the President's desk quickly.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). The Chair will remind all Members to refrain from improper references to the Senate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. WYNN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. WYNN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CASTRO CLOSES DOLLAR STORES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to discuss a disturbing chain of events on the Island of Cuba this week. On Tuesday, Cubans awoke to find the Island's dollar stores, stores that accept U.S. dollars and provide Cubans with basic hygiene and food items, were closed.

The Castro government called this a reaction to new sanctions placed on Cuba by the U.S. Castro said that this was because of new limits being placed on remittances given to Cubans from their families in the U.S. Cubans were not given a date or time when the stores would reopen, simply left to read signs posted on the front door that read "closed until further notice."

Mr. Speaker, to explain to the average American what these stores mean to the Cuban people, a monthly ration covers eight eggs, about a pint of cooking oil, six pounds of rice, a half pound of ground meat/soy mixture, and other goods each month. Everything else has to be purchased for higher prices at either state-run stores, in pesos, or the dollar stores, in dollars, obviously.

Essentially, the Cubans are being told by Castro that the closings were the result of a new American policy, keeping Castro clear of any responsibility in the matter. So, not surprisingly, there was a run on basic necessities at the state-run stores. Mind you, the state-run stores carry bare minimum products. Even still, Cubans rushed to buy up shampoo and dishwashing detergent, worried that "closed until further notice" could mean closed for weeks, months, or even years to come.

Castro has since realized the error in his plans. News was released this afternoon that the dollar stores were suddenly reopened this morning, and the Castro regime is now saying that the stores were simply closed for inventory and to allow for price increases. So now the Cubans have regained access to the